

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



NEWS RELEASE

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Chairmen Davis, Cox and Sensenbrenner Ask Secretary Ridge to Speed SAFETY Act Designations

*Act Encourages Rapid Development of Anti-Terrorism Products,
But Chairmen Worry DHS Application Process is Causing Delays*

Washington, D.C. – The chairmen of the House Government Reform Committee, the House Judiciary Committee and the House Select Committee on Homeland Security have asked Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge to streamline the Department's process for designating critical anti-terrorism technologies as certified for the legal protections outlined in the SAFETY Act.

The Support Anti-terrorism by Fostering Effective Technologies Act of 2002 (SAFETY Act) was passed as part of the legislation creating the Homeland Security Department. To encourage the development and deployment of anti-terrorism technologies, the Act protects people or business who sell or provide those technologies from punitive damages and other excessive non-economic claims of liability in terrorism cases.

The role of the Homeland Security Department is to conduct a basic analysis of the technology to confirm that it works and does not pose an inherent risk of injury to others. The Department is further directed to use market-based information to determine the optimal liability limit and level of insurance coverage sellers must maintain.

While this process is designed to be a straightforward and simple one, the Chairmen were disappointed to learn that DHS has received relatively few SAFETY Act applications and has yet to designate a single technology under the Act. Their concern is that the Department's application process, instead of speeding the deployment of critical technologies, has erected lengthy and burdensome bureaucratic obstacles.

“Prompt implementation of the SAFETY Act is of critical importance given the elevated threat of terrorism facing the American people. Nobody wants developing technologies that can detect or prevent acts of terrorism involving biological, chemical, nuclear, and other potentially devastating weapons to be stuck in the approval pipeline at the Department of Homeland Security and not protecting the American public,” said Congressman F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr. (R-WI), Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee.

Chairman Christopher Cox (R-CA) of the House Select Committee on Homeland Security said, “Implementation of the SAFETY Act is essential to the rapid deployment of antiterrorism technologies to protect Americans. The security of our Nation is far too important to be caught up in administrative red tape.”

Congressman Tom Davis (R-VA), Chairman of the House Committee on Government Reform, added: “In our fight against terrorism and our efforts to protect the homeland, we must harness the creative, cutting-edge technologies being developed by the private sector. The SAFETY Act must work as intended: To speed up the deployment of these technologies, not to slow them down.”

A copy of the letter sent to Secretary Ridge is attached.

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